

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The present invention can be understood more completely by reading the following Detailed Description of exemplary embodiments, in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, in which:

5 FIGS. 1A, 1B and 1C together describe a structured process for managing an IT project;

FIG. 2 shows an exemplary system for implementing the process shown in FIGS. 1A, 1B and 1C;

10 FIG. 3 describes an exemplary database for storing information used in the process shown in FIGS. 1A, 1B and 1C;

FIG. 4 shows an exemplary main screen page for presenting information pertaining to principal steps in the process;

FIG. 5 shows an exemplary screen page for presenting information pertaining to one of the principal steps listed in FIG. 4; and

15 FIG. 6 shows a “thermometer” display screen for presenting an overview of the level of completion of the process.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

1. The Project Management Technique

FIG. 1 (including FIGS. 1A, 1B and 1C) identifies exemplary steps in a
20 process for managing an information technology project. The information technology project may pertain to a wide range of projects, including the introduction or upgrade of various local network systems or services (e.g., intranet applications), various database management systems or services, various Internet systems or services (e.g., web page applications), various administrative systems and services (e.g., accounting
25 systems and services), etc. To simplify the explanation, the ensuing discussion generically refers to any system or service produced by the IT project as an “IT product,” or alternatively, an “IT solution.”

The principles described here can be used to supply IT solutions to any entity, including any person or organization (such as a partnership, corporation, non-profit
30 organization, government organization, etc.). For instance, the techniques can be used by a project management team within an organization to develop IT products for use

by the organization. The techniques can also be used by a project management team to supply IT solutions to any other individual or organization (e.g., on a contract basis). To simplify the explanation, the ensuing discussion assumes that a project management team is acting within an organizational setting and is using the technique
5 to supply an IT solution to its own organization, or some other organization.

By way of overview, one basic purpose of the management technique is to provide rigor to the IT development process. At the same time, another purpose of the technique is to provide a structured process that is flexible enough to serve a variety of different IT applications (such as, but not limited to, the applications
10 mentioned above).

Turning now to FIG. 1, the process generally includes seven principal steps interspersed with approval steps. The principal steps pertain to basic tasks performed in developing an IT project. The first principal step 104 pertains to the task of assessing the feasibility of the project to determine whether to proceed with the
15 project. The second principal step 108 pertains to performing initial project analysis to determine the project's functional requirements. The third principal step 112 pertains to designing the IT product. The fourth principal step 116 pertains to building the IT product. The fifth principal step 120 pertains to testing the IT product. The sixth principal step 124 pertains to implementing the IT product. The last
20 principal step 128 pertains to closing-out the IT project, which includes evaluating the project.

On a higher level of abstraction, the process flow can be categorized into multiple phases. The correspondence between the phases and the principal steps may not be exact. Nevertheless, a Definition Phase generally corresponds to the first
25 principal step (i.e., assessing the feasibility of the project). A Measurement and Analysis Phase generally corresponds to the second principal step (i.e., performing initial project analysis). A Design and Improvement phase generally corresponds to the third, fourth, fifth and sixth principal steps (i.e., designing, building, testing and implementing the IT product). Finally, a Verify and Control Phase generally
30 corresponds to the seventh principal step (i.e., closing-out the IT project). These phases are identified in the vertical column adjacent to the flow steps. The phases

(Define, Measurement, Analysis, Improvement, Verify and Control) collectively represent a structured and “scientific” approach to developing the IT project.

Each principal step may produce one or more outputs, referred to as “deliverables.” The deliverables may comprise documents or related products (e.g., systems, software code, etc.) generated in the course of performing the principal step. The right-most column in FIG. 1 identifies the deliverables produced by each principal step. These deliverables are also discussed in further detail below.

Selected principal steps terminate in approval steps, which define an approval procedure. For instance, the first principal step 104 terminates in approval procedure 106. The second principal step 108 terminates in approval step 110. The third principal step 112 terminates in approval step 114. The fourth principal step 116 terminates in approval step 118. The fifth principal step 120 terminates in approval step 122. The sixth principal step 124 terminates in approval step 126. And the seventh principal step 128 terminates in approval step 130. Approval procedures establish baseline criteria that the evolving project should meet, at various stages of development, to ensure that it remains viable. For instance, approval step 106 defines criteria that the project should meet at the completion of the first principal step 104. The approval procedures also identify the individuals (referred to herein as “authorizing agents”) assigned the role of evaluating the developing project with reference to the baseline criteria.

The authorizing agents used to approve a principal step may vary depending on the business environment in which the IT solution is presented, as well as the characteristics of the IT solution itself. For instance, an IT solution pertaining to a telecommunications system would likely use a different set of authorizing agents than an IT solution pertaining to an accounts receivable program. That is, a project pertaining to a telecommunications system may warrant the use of agents having familiarity with telecommunications infrastructure, routers, etc. In contrast, a project pertaining to an accounts receivable system may warrant the use of agents having experience with programming, business operations, accounting principles, etc.

The effect of the approval steps is to halt the development of the project at various stages of the process and demand that the process satisfy prescribed criteria.